



CALFED BAY-DELTA PROGRAM

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The Resources Agency



of California



Cal/EPA



NEWS RELEASE

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MILESTONE IN COLLABORATIVE EFFORT TO MANAGE WATER AND PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

SACRAMENTO, CA-- Several state and federal agencies have joined environmentalists, farmers, urban water purveyors, and others in announcing three alternative plans for protecting and managing California's Bay-Delta, a critical natural habitat and the hub of California's water distribution system.

Release of the three alternatives, announced at a news conference on the shores of the Sacramento River at 10:00 a.m. on Sept. 3, 1996, represents significant progress for the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, a collaborative effort to resolve decades-old conflicts over the Bay-Delta. The news event also marked the official commencement of the Bay-Delta Program's second phase, which will concentrate on environmental review and refinement of the alternatives.

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CALFED Agencies

California

The Resources Agency
Department of Fish and Game
Department of Water Resources
California Environmental Protection Agency
State Water Resources Control Board

Federal

Environmental Protection Agency
Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Reclamation
Department of Commerce
National Marine Fisheries Service

SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TOWARD BAY-DELTA SOLUTION -- 2

The Bay-Delta is the 738,000-acre region where the San Francisco Bay meets the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta. It supports at least 120 fish and wildlife species; supplies drinking water for 20 million people in northern, central, and southern California; and irrigates 4 million acres of farmland. Launched in June 1995, the CALFED Bay-Delta Program is a cooperative effort of state and federal agencies, with significant stakeholder and public input, to develop a long-term plan to ensure a healthy ecosystem; reliable, high-quality water supplies; and stable levees in the Bay-Delta.

"The selection of three Bay-Delta alternatives represents another milestone in the implementation of Governor Wilson's Water Policy and in the realization of its goal of 'fixing' this essential estuary," says Doug Wheeler, California secretary for resources and chairman of Governor Wilson's Water Policy Council.

"By bringing the major water sectors together with the state and federal governments, and by working collaboratively with all the parties, we are taking an important step toward ensuring both an adequate, certain, long-term supply of water for all Californians and the health of one of the world's great estuaries," Wheeler adds.

"The U.S. EPA is proud to contribute to this historic process to date," says Bob Perciasepe, assistant administrator for water at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. "The continued commitment of stakeholders representing a wide range of interests all over the state is very encouraging, and extremely important. This commitment to a public process of consensus-building is vital to a successful outcome for the Bay-Delta and all Californians."

"Improving water quality in the Bay-Delta region is critical for California's future," says James M. Strock, California secretary for environmental protection. "The State Water Resources Control Board will carefully consider the interests of all water users as it makes the best decisions for the environment in the years ahead."

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SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TOWARD BAY-DELTA SOLUTION -- 3

Says John Garamendi, U.S. deputy secretary of interior, "The long and difficult process of restoring the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers and the San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary while providing adequate water for all of California has taken a critical turn toward success. The passage of Proposition 204 in November will be the next important step that Californians can take to enhance our future."

At the news conference, state and federal officials were joined by Mike Madigan, Chairman of the Bay-Delta Advisory Council (BDAC); and Sunne Wright McPeak, Vice Chairman of BDAC. BDAC is a diverse group of more than 30 Bay-Delta stakeholders who meet regularly to advise the CALFED Bay-Delta Program.

Other news conference speakers included Nat Bingham, habitat director for the Pacific Coast Federation of Fisheries Associations; Gary Bobker, policy analyst for the Bay Institute; Byron Buck, executive director of the California Urban Water Agencies; and Dan Nelson, executive director of the San Luis Delta Mendota Water Agency. Individuals and groups from the fisheries, environmental, urban, and agricultural water user communities, considered to be some of the key stakeholder groups interested in the Bay-Delta, participated in the public process to help develop the three alternatives.

All of the alternatives call for extensive habitat restoration, widespread water conservation and reclamation, and multiple measures to protect water quality and stabilize levees. The alternatives differ primarily in their approach to conveying water: Alternative 1 uses existing Delta channels, Alternative 2 uses existing channels with significant improvements, and Alternative 3 combines improved through-Delta channels with an isolated water conveyance facility.

Each alternative will also include storage, ranging from groundwater banking and conjunctive use to off stream surface storage.

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SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TOWARD BAY-DELTA SOLUTION -- 4

Release of the three alternatives marks the end of the Program's Phase I. During Phase II, which will last until late 1998, the Program will conduct a broad-based environmental review of the three alternatives, culminating in an Environmental Impact Report/Statement that recommends a single, comprehensive Bay-Delta solution. Following federal and state approval of the EIR/S, the process of implementing the Bay-Delta solution (Phase II) will begin

To receive a written description of the three alternatives, or to be placed on the CALFED Bay-Delta Program mailing list, members of the public may call the Program office at 916/657-2666 during regular office hours.

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